

military ruler, Gen. Sani Abacha, yesterday in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. Although the circumstances surrounding his death remain unclear, it is my hope that his death will provide an opportunity for a new era in Nigeria.

As the Ranking Democrat of the Senate Subcommittee on Africa, I have long been concerned about the collapsing economic and political situation in Nigeria. Nigeria, with its rich history, abundant natural resources and wonderful cultural diversity, has the potential to be an important regional leader. But, sadly, it has squandered that potential and the good will of the world with repressive policies, human rights abuses and corruption, all of which proliferated during Abacha's tenure.

Although there was no clear line of succession, Nigeria's top military leaders met into the night yesterday to select Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar as the new head of state. We do not know much about Gen. Abubakar, but we know that he has an historic opportunity to effect real political change for the country.

Last month, I introduced the Nigerian Democracy and Civil Society Empowerment Act (S. 2102). The provisions of my bill include benchmarks defining what would constitute an open political process in Nigeria. I call on Gen. Abubakar to implement as soon as possible some of these important changes, such as the repeal of the repressive decrees enacted under Abacha's rule, so that genuine reform can finally take place in Nigeria. The new leadership should demonstrate respect for the rights of all Nigerians to express their views. Most importantly, Gen. Abubakar should take advantage of this opportunity to immediately move toward free and fair elections and unconditionally release all political prisoners, including the winner of the annulled 1993 elections, Chief Moshood K.O. Abiola.

Abacha's death should represent not just a change in leadership, but ought to result in real change for the average Nigerian.

Finally, I believe the United States should take a clear and public stand to demonstrate its support for a clear transition to civilian rule in Nigeria. Now is the time for the United States to make unequivocally clear that the military should exercise restraint in the near and long term, begin to build bridges to the pro-democracy forces, and do everything possible to end the current political crisis and restore legitimacy to the Nigerian government.

I urge the Administration to communicate these sentiments quickly to Nigeria's new leadership.●

TRIBUTE TO JUNE SALANDER

● Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to June Salander of Rutland, Vermont. On May 9, 1998 June Salander celebrated her bat mitzv-

vah at the remarkable age of 89. Mrs. Salander is a dear neighbor, mentor, and friend from my days growing up in Rutland, Vermont. It is believed she is the oldest Rutlander to celebrate a bat mitzvah. Over a hundred people attended the ceremony, one of many indicators of the inspiration she is to her family, friends, community, and faith.

Born in 1908 in Poland, June Salander came to America in 1920 to New York City with her family via Ellis Island. In 1941 she married her husband and moved to Vermont where she has resided ever since. In her many years as a citizen of Rutland she has been an active member of the community. She has served as a volunteer at the Rutland Jewish Center, as a Hebrew School teacher, and at the Rutland Hospital with the Grey Ladies.

In addition to filling the role as a bedrock member of her community she has also filled many stomachs with her famous cooking. Her strudel is legendary throughout the area and to the many people traveling through who she has opened her home to over the years. Her strudel recipe was even featured in a cookbook containing Jewish recipes honed in the United States. I can personally attest to the greatness of June Salander's cooking as I was able to eat breakfast at the Salanders when I was growing up as a boy on Kingsley Avenue in Rutland. She continues to teach cooking informally and will appear on a cooking video that will air on PBS in the near future.

Perhaps her most admirable quality is the energy she continues to display as she reaches her golden years. For some it means an idle time in their life but not for June Salander. When she was sixty-two she received her real estate license and remained active until recently. She picked up tennis when she was seventy-three and played for almost ten years. This fall she will travel all the way to Israel to attend the wedding of a niece.

I am glad my wife Liz was able to attend June's bat mitzvah on that Saturday and pass on our well wishes to June. I also wish her well as she approaches her ninetieth birthday on June 28, 1998. Mr. President, I would like to publicly recognize June's upstanding citizenship and the inspiration she is to the rest of us as she continues to embrace life into her nineties.●

TRIBUTE TO JACQUELYN BENSON AND ALEXANDER KAUFMAN 1998 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS

● Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Jacquelyn Benson and Alexander Kaufman of New Hampshire for being named 1998 United States Presidential Scholars.

Jacquelyn Benson is a student at Winnacunnet High School in Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, and has been active in her school's National Honor So-

ciety and Art Department. Jacquelyn plays the piano, is currently working on a book of fiction, and plans to attend Northeastern University in the fall. She chose Ms. Toni Talas as her most influential teacher.

Alexander Kaufman is also a 1998 Presidential Scholar. As a student at Phillips Exeter Academy in Dover, New Hampshire, Alexander has excelled in writing and math and was the editor of the school's poetry journal. He is also active in environmental issues and will be attending Harvard University in the fall. Alexander selected the late Frederick Tremallo as his most influential teacher.

The United States Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964, by Executive Order of President JOHNSON, to recognize and honor some of our nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors. Each year, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars selects up to 141 Scholars on the basis of their accomplishments in many areas: academic and artistic success, scholarship, leadership, and involvement in school and community. The Commission invites the students to Washington, DC, to be honored for their accomplishments during National Recognition Week.

The Scholars, as guests of the Commission, along with their families and the teachers whom the Scholars have chosen as the "most influential" in their academic and artistic endeavors, will be involved in many activities while in Washington, DC. They will participate in informative panel discussions, a ceremony sponsored by the White House, a reception and art exhibit of the work by Scholars in the Visual Arts at the National Museum for American Art, and an evening at the Kennedy Center featuring performances by the Scholars in the Performing Arts.

As a former teacher and school board chairman, I recognize the challenges involved in providing students a quality education. Congratulations to Jacquelyn and Alexander for their distinguished recognition. I am pleased they have been recognized for their success and it is with great pleasure that I represent them in the United States Senate.●

CONGRATULATIONS TO MRS. GRACE BABCOCK

● Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, it is my great pleasure to honor Mrs. Grace Babcock of Helena, Montana. Grace will be 88 years young on July 29, 1998. She has the wonderful distinction of being the oldest state employee for my home state of Montana. I join Grace's family, friends, and co-workers in thanking her for a job well done!

Grace was born on July 29, 1910 in Deer Lodge, Montana. She was one of nine children. Early on, here family moved to the Canton Valley outside of Townsend, Montana. She married Carter Babcock in 1930. They became